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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9891
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE 0285
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 000178

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG, AND
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NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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SUBJECT: TFCD01: FRANCE LIMITS ENGAGEMENT WITH KHARTOUM

REF: KHARTOUM 00116

Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) France has not engaged with the Sudanese Government at any level since the Chadian opposition attempted to overthrow President Deby's regime in recent days, French First Secretary Arnaud Suquet told Poloff on February 4. French

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Ambassador Christine Robichon has received no instructions from Paris to demarche the Sudanese Government and was scheduled to depart the country on pre-planned leave on February 4. The French diplomat said that no officials in Paris have called Khartoum since the Chadian crisis began, adding that "we are waiting for the dust to settle." Paris is confident that the Chadian Government will survive, said Suquet, suggesting that Deby lured the Chadian opposition to N'djamena to "eliminate them" and that the rebels' supply lines are now overextended.

12. (C) If Paris becomes "truly displeased" with Khartoum, Suquet speculated, the Quai d'Orsay will call in the Sudanese Ambassador in Paris. The French Embassy intends to maintain a "low profile" in the coming days, anticipating that a complete route of the Chadian opposition could lead to "harder times" in the France-Sudan relationship.

13. (C) The last interaction between French diplomats in Khartoum and Sudanese officials came just after Chadian aircraft bombed targets within Sudan in early January. During meetings with Robichon in the days after this incident, senior Sudanese officials expressed adamant opposition to the deployment of EUFOR, according to Suquet. Despite its low-key approach in Khartoum, Paris is convinced of Sudan's robust support for the Chadian opposition.

14. (C) Suquet characterized the recent confrontation as a Sudanese attempt to draw the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)--one of Darfur's most formidable, Zaghawa-dominated rebel factions--out of Sudan and into Chad where they could be defeated by Khartoum's proxies (reftel). The French official confirmed third-party reports that Sudanese Defense Minister Abdulrahim Mohammed Hussein--who had spent several days in West Darfur at the end of January--had returned to El Geneina in the last 72 hours and that a new column of several hundred Chadian rebels had crossed the Chadian border from West Darfur on February 4.

15. (C) French officials put little stock in the prospects of external mediation to defuse the crisis, and Suquet intimated that a military solution is more likely. A Libyan-Congolese

attempt to broker a cease-fire had collapsed, he said, and Deby remained a "military man." Regarding public reports that France is airlifting arms from Tripoli to re-supply Chadian forces--despite earlier indications that Libya held Deby responsible for escalating Sudan-Chad tensions--Suquet suggested that Leader Qaddhafi wants to maintain "a balance."

(Comment: If Tripoli believes that Khartoum over-played its hand in Chad, it has additional levers--such as support for Darfur rebel factions with which it has strong ties, such as JEM and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Unity--to express its displeasure. End comment.)

16. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
FERNANDEZ